

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03183 01 OF 02 100933Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00  
CIAE-00 /026 W

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O 091423Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8239

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3183

EXDIS, FROM CHARGE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, LE, IS

SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS, JUNE 9

REF: BEIRUT 3109

1. I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS AT NOON ON JUNE 9  
FOR A GENERAL UPDATE OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. DURING  
45-MINUTE CONVERSATION HE MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

2. DEPLOYMENT OF THE LEBANESE ARMY (LAF) IN SOUTH LEBANON.  
BOUTROS SAID IT WAS "NOT IMPOSSIBLE" THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY  
WOULD DEPLOY TO SOUTH LEBANON BEFORE JUNE 15. THE ROUTE WOULD  
BE AS WE HAD PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED, THROUGH THE BEQAA TO THE  
MARJAYUN AREA. THERE WILL BE A FINAL PLANNING SESSION INVOL-  
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03183 01 OF 02 100933Z

VING SYRIAN AND LEBANESE ARMY OFFICERS AT THE MINISTRY OF  
DEFENSE SATURDAY MORNING, JUNE 10, AT WHICH TIME, BOUTROS  
THOUGHT, A FINAL DECISION WOULD BE MADE ON WHETHER OR NOT  
THE ARMY WAS READY TO MOVE FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW.  
BOUTROS SAID THAT THIS WAS A MILITARY SESSION IN WHICH HE WOULD  
NOT REPEAT NOT TAKE PART.

3. BOUTROS THEN DISCUSSED BRIEFLY THE ATTITUDES OF VARIOUS PARTIES INVOLVED TOWARDS THIS MOVE. HE SAID THE SYRIANS WERE CONTINUING TO PROMISE FULL SUPPORT "IN WORDS," ALTHOUGH HE WAS OBVIOUSLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT WHAT KIND OF ASSISTANCE THEY WOULD PROVIDE IN A CRISIS. BOUTROS SAID HE HAD JUST RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM PRIME MINISTER HOSS SAYING THAT ARAFAT HAD PROMISED TO COOPERATE, BUT BOUTROS WAS UNSURE ABOUT ARAFAT'S SINCERITY AND HIS ABILITY TO CONTROL ALL PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS. IF GEORGE HABBASH DECIDES TO OPPOSE THE LAF DEPLOYMENT SOUTH, BOUTROS SAID, HE WILL CERTAINLY GET SOME LEBANESE ELEMENTS TO JOIN HIM AND THIS WOULD BE VERY BAD. HE DID NOT CONSIDER THE OPPOSITION OF THE LEBANESE FRONT TO BE A SERIOUS IMPEDIMENT.

4. CONTACTS WITH HADDAD. BOUTROS SAID THAT HE HAD ORDERED OFFICIAL COMMAND AND INTELLIGENCE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS BETWEEN LAF HEADQUARTERS AT YARZE AND MAJOR HADDAD TO BE RE-OPENED YESTERDAY AND HE THOUGHT THAT CONTACT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TODAY. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTIONS, HE SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN ONE DIRECT CONTACT WITH HADDAD IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS BUT THE RESULT HAD NOT BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL. IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE LAF TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH HADDAD BECAUSE THIS IMPLIED NEGOTIATIONS AND CREATED POLITICAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE ARMY. THE GOL WAS THEREFORE GETTING INFORMATION ABOUT HADDAD'S POSITION FROM THE ISRAELIS VIA GENERAL SIILASVUO. BOUTROS SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT SIILASVUO HIMSELF WAS IN TOUCH WITH HADDAD DIRECTLY BUT FELT SURE THAT LOWER-LEVEL CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03183 01 OF 02 100933Z

UN AND UNIFIL OFFICERS WERE AND ASSUMED THEY WERE PASSING INFORMATION TO SIILASVUO. BOUTROS HINTED THAT THERE WERE ALSO A NUMBER OF UNOFFICIAL EMISSARIES, INCLUDING A FEW MILITARY OFFICERS, WHO HAD CARRIED MESSAGES BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN LAF HEADQUARTERS AND HADDAD DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS.

5. BOUTROS SAID THAT IT WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE TO GET UNITS OF THE LAF INTO SOUTH LEBANON AS SOON AS THE ISRAELIS WITHDREW SINCE THIS WOULD SIMPLIFY THE PROBLEM OF DEALING WITH HADDAD. BOUTROS UNDERSTOOD THAT HADDAD HAD AGREED TO PUT HIMSELF AT THE ORDERS OF THE LAF IF IT WENT SOUTH. THIS MEANT THAT GENERAL KHOURY COULD SIMPLY ISSUE INSTRUCTIONS TELLING HADDAD WHICH UNITS WERE COMING AND TELLING HIM TO PUT HIMSELF AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE SENIOR OFFICER IN CHARGE. ON THE OTHER HAND, ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION BOUTROS HAD RECEIVED, HADDAD HAD INDICATED THAT HE MIGHT THREATEN THE UNIFIL CONTINGENTS IF THEY ATTEMPTED TO ENTER HIS AREA OF OPERATIONS. BOUTROS SAID HE HAD REPORTS THAT PALESTINIANS WERE CONTINUING TO INFILTRATE UNIFIL AREA AND NO ONE HAD ANY CONFIDENCE IN UNIFIL'S WILLINGNESS TO FIGHT. THIS COULD CREATE PROBLEMS. SUPPOSE, FOR EXAMPLE, A UNIFIL UNIT TOOK OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR A CHRISTIAN VILLAGE AFTER HADDAD'S MEN HAD WITHDRAWN AND THIS

VILLAGE WAS THEN ATTACKED BY THE PALESTINIANS. IF UNIFIL DID NOT STAND AND FIGHT AND THE VILLAGE WERE OVERRUN, THE WAR WOULD BEGIN AGAIN IN BEIRUT AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

6. SIILASVUO VISIT. BOUTROS SAID THAT GENERAL SIILASVUO WAS MEETING WITH GENERAL KHOURY WHILE WE WERE TALKING AND HAD ASKED TO SEE BOUTROS IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER. SINCE SIILASVUO HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO SEE ONLY KHOURY, BOUTROS ASSUMED THAT SIILASVUO HAD SOME NEW INFORMATION TO GIVE HIM ABOUT THE ISRAELI/HADDAD POSITION. WE AGREED THAT I WOULD CALL HIM TOMORROW MORNING (SATURDAY, JUNE 10) TO SEE IF THERE WERE ANYTHING NEW THAT HE WISHED TO PASS ON TO US.

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03183 02 OF 02 091516Z  
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O 091423Z JUN 78  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 3183

EXDIS  
FROM CHARGE

7. THE GOOD FENCE. DURING A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM OF THE GOOD FENCE, BOUTROS ASKED RHETORICALLY HOW CAN I LEAVE IT OPEN? HE OBVIOUSLY FELT THAT THE POLITICAL PRESSURE FROM SYRIA AND SOME LEBANESE POLITICAL GROUPS WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO DO SO. HE WAS THEREFORE THINKING OF HAVING UNIFIL STATIONED ALONG THE BORDER ITSELF SO THAT LAF TROOPS WOULD NOT BE FACED WITH THE PROBLEM. HE THOUGHT THAT IN THIS WAY IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR THE GOL TO "BUY A LITTLE TIME" IN WHICH TO TRY TO WORK OUT THIS PROBLEM AFTER LAF HAD SETTLED ITS RELATIONS WITH HADDAD.

8. COMMENT: BOUTROS REMARKED GLUMLY THAT HE KNEW THE USG AND

SOME OTHERS HAD BEEN IMPATIENT WITH THE GOL FOR NOT MOVING LAF UNITS TO THE SOUTH, BUT NO ONE COULD UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITY AND DIFFICULTY OF THE PROBLEMS UNLESS, LIKE HIMSELF, HE HAD TO DEAL WITH THEM PERSONALLY. IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT SARKIS, BOUTROS, HOSS AND KHOURY, IN TRYING TO DECIDE WHEN AND IF TO MOVE LAF UNITS SOUTH, MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03183 02 OF 02 091516Z

OPINIONS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS OF A LARGE NUMBER OF COMPETING FACTIONS. IF REPEAT IF THE SYRIANS AND ARAFAT ARE REALLY PREPARED TO HELP, AND IF ISRAEL DOES NOT INFLUENCE HADDAD TO POSE IMPOSSIBLE CONDITIONS, THE GOL MAY PULL IT OFF. BUT IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, ANY OF THESE KEY ACTORS ARE DETERMINED TO SABOTAGE THE OPERATION, THEY CAN PROBABLY CREATE A SITUATION IN WHICH THE LEBANESE ARMY WILL BE BEATEN OR HUMILIATED. IF THIS HAPPENS, THE AUTHORITY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT UNDER PRESIDENT SARKIS WILL BE EVEN WEAKER THAN IT IS NOW.

9. POSSIBLE MOVE OF SYRIAN ADF FORCES SOUTH OF THE RED LINE. DAMASCUS 3325 ILLUSTRATES GOL'S PROBLEM IN GETTING RELIABLE SYRIANSUPPORT FOR DEPLOYMENT OF LAF UNITS IN SOUTH LEBANON. SYRIANS HAVE MADE CLEAR ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT THEY WILL NOT BE PUT IN POSITION OF CONTROLLING PALESTINIANS IN ORDER TO PREVENT THEM FROM ATTACKING ISRAEL. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF SYRIAN ROLE IN AREA BETWEEN ZAHRANI AND LITANI CAN BE CAST IN TERMS OF SUPPORT FOR GOL EFFORT TO REASSERT ITS SOVEREIGNTY IN SOUTH LEBANON, THEY MAY BE WILLING TO COOPERATE. THIS IS APPROACH THAT GOL IS NOW TAKING.

10. DATT APPROACH TO GENERAL KHOURY. WE BELIEVE A DIRECT APPROACH BY DATT TO GENERAL KHOURY URGING HIM TO SEND LEBANESE SOLDIERS TO THE SOUTH, AS PROPOSED BY AMBASSADOR TUENI (USUN 2357), WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE. WHILE WE AGREE IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR LEBANESE ARMY TO ESTABLISH ITS PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON AS SOON AS IT CAN DO SO SAFELY, THE FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT LAF SHOULD MOVE SHOULD COME FROM THE POLITICAL AUTHORITIES IN LEBANON. FOR US TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY WITH KHOURY WOULD UNDERMINE SARKIS' AUTHORITY AS WELL AS EXPOSING US TO GRAVE RISKS AND CRITICISMS SHOULD THE LEBANESE ARMY BE ATTACKED AND FAIL IN ITS MISSION TO REESTABLISH THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH. END COMMENT.

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03183 02 OF 02 091516Z

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## Message Attributes

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